

# STRESS CHECK

## Stress

Stress is a physical and psychological reaction to any change in your life. There are two types of stress, good stress and bad stress.

Good stress is feeling excited because you got an A on your paper, or you are about to graduate.

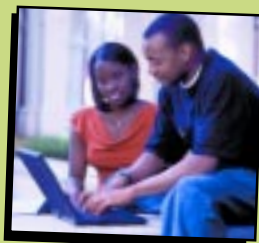
Bad stress is feeling depressed or anxious because of burnout or life's problems.

Whether it is good or bad stress, we all experience one form of stress everyday.

- *Anything that causes changes in your daily routine is a stressor.*

- *Anything that causes changes in your body health is a stressor.*

- *Anything that causes changes in your mental health is a stressor.*



## Are you Drinking to Beat the College Blues?

### We'll think again!

1. Do you drink heavily after a disappointment, a quarrel or a major test?
2. When you have trouble or feel stressed, do you crave alcohol?
3. Do you feel like you have to drink alcohol to have a good time at a party?
4. Do you feel like you have to drink alcohol to feel comfortable to talk to new people?

**Answering "yes" to these questions means you may be using alcohol to reduce stress.**

**Having problems with your alcohol use? Contact your school's counseling or health services center for confidential advice and care.**

## Common Stressors for College Students

**Emotional Triggers** – Engaging in arguments, disagreements, and conflicts with friends, family, roommates and significant other.

**Overworking** – "Burnout" from working, partying, or studying 20 hrs a day.

**Physiological Triggers** – Getting sick, hormonal changes, poor nutrition, lack of sleep.

**Your Thoughts** – Having a negative self-concept and self-esteem, exaggerating minor events, having a pessimistic view of life.

**Social Stressors** – Working, socializing, establishing friendships, losing loved ones, living arrangements (on and off campus).

**Academics** – Finals!! Papers, tests, group projects, final exams.

**Financial** – Money for tuition, books, supplies.

## Warning Signs of Being Stressed Out

### Physical Signs

- ✓ Frequent muscle aches
- ✓ Recurring colds or other illnesses
- ✓ Indigestion
- ✓ Ulcers
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Difficulty sleeping
- ✓ Changes in eating patterns
- ✓ Frequent headaches

### Emotional Signs

- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Uncontrollable anger or frustration
- ✓ Fear or anxiety
- ✓ "Burnout"/feeling overwhelmed
- ✓ Mood swings/short tempered

### Cognitive Signs

- ✓ Difficulty concentrating
- ✓ Difficulty completing tasks
- ✓ Becoming disorganized

## Relaxation Techniques

- ☺ Deep breathing – Take one minute, two or three times a day to close your eyes, and take 10 deep breathes slowly. Relax your shoulders and body.
- ☺ Learn to cry – Crying can be a healthy way to bring relief and it might even prevent a headache or other physical consequences.
- ☺ Positive Thinking – Have an optimistic view.

## Stress Management

### Plan, Organize and Budget Time

**Make a schedule:** First, take time each day to study. Cramming never works, it only stresses you out and deprives you of sleep.

**Set priorities and valued objectives:** Establish what things are most important in your life. Always list your top priorities and long-term assignments at the top of each week's schedule.

**Do Not Procrastinate!** Waiting to the last minute to do everything is very stressful. Allow yourself enough time to get things done.

**Use a monthly calendar:** A calendar allows you to make long-term plans, keep reminders of what's coming up in the future and make deadlines for yourself.

**Concentrate on one thing at a time:** When you focus on too many things at once, it's difficult to give each priority quality attention.

**Reward yourself:** Give yourself a pat on the back for achieving your goals. Healthy rewards would include, buying yourself a small gift, treating yourself to a movie, or spending time with special friends. Avoid rewards that center on food or alcohol.

**Make time for fun and laughter!**

### Get Enough Sleep and Exercise

Are you getting enough sleep? The consequences of sleepiness include reduced productivity, poor work and school performance, and reduced quality of life. If you are have trouble getting a good nights sleep, here are a few tips to help you get your Zzzz's.

- ✓ Maintain regular bedtime and awakening time
- ✓ Cut back on caffeine
- ✓ Get regular exercise
- ✓ Avoid alcohol
- ✓ Relax
- ✓ Avoid heavy meals within three hours of bedtime

Don't worry – laying in bed worrying about what you need to do the next day or the things you can't change will not change the event you are worrying about.

### Eat Healthy

Healthy eating, getting enough sleep, exercise and fresh air are valuable tools to prevent stress.

Try eating more vegetables and fruits as snacks during the day. No more late night pizza, chicken wings, or Chinese food runs.

### Decide on Your Goals/Major/Classes

Explore your career options and choose a path that is best for you. Decide what type of student you want to be and work towards that goal.

### Discuss Your Problems

Find someone you can trust and respect to help in areas of stress and to encourage you to reach your goals. Visit the counseling center on campus.



## Stress Busters

- ☞ Start off your day with breakfast.
- ☞ Find some time during the day to meditate or listen to a relaxation tape.
- ☞ Instead of drinking coffee or soda all day, switch to fruit juice or water.
- ☞ Organize your work – set priorities.
- ☞ Don't try to be perfect. Don't feel like you have to do everything.
- ☞ Avoid trying to do too many things at a time.
- ☞ Develop a support network.
- ☞ If possible, reduce the noise level in your environment.
- ☞ Always take a lunch break (preferably not at your desk).
- ☞ Optimize your health with good nutrition, sleep and rest.
- ☞ Get regular exercise.
- ☞ Avoid people who are "stress carriers."
- ☞ Avoid people who are "negaholics."
- ☞ Give yourself praise and positive strokes.

- ☞ Develop a variety of resources for gratification in your life – whether it's family, friends, hobbies, special weekends or vacations.
- ☞ Treat yourself to "new and good things."
- ☞ Be assertive. Learn to express your needs and differences, to make requests, and to say "no" constructively.
- ☞ Don't be afraid to ask questions or to ask for help.
- ☞ Allow extra time to get to appointments.
- ☞ Take lots of deep breaths when you feel stressed.
- ☞ Take a "mental health day."
- ☞ Practice mindfulness-learn to live in the moment.
- ☞ Become a less aggressive driver.
- ☞ When stressed ask yourself: "Is this really important?" "Will this really matter a year from now?"
- ☞ Resist the urge to judge or criticize.
- ☞ Become a better listener.
- ☞ Be flexible with change – things don't always go as we planned.

## Stress and Alcohol Don't Mix!

- ☼ Alcohol use is associated with 40% of all academic problems and 28% of all college dropouts.
- ☼ Alcohol can impair your test-taking ability up to 30 days after a heavy night of drinking.
- ☼ College students that drink heavily typically have lower grades.
- ☼ Alcohol depresses the brain and nervous system, leaving you feeling worse than you did before you took a drink.
- ☼ Alcohol consumption reduces sleep, and increases anxiety and depression.
- ☼ Using alcohol as a stress reliever will place you at risk of becoming an alcoholic.
- ☼ Alcohol abuse is the third leading cause of death in the United States and contributes to about 20% of psychiatric hospitalizations and 35% of suicides.

**Please contact your counseling or health services center to receive a confidential appointment to discuss stress and alcohol use.**



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**"When I first went away to school, I was overwhelmed by the newness of it. There was always a party at someone's house or a night out on the town. I always seemed to be eating out or socializing with friends and there never seemed to be enough time for school work."**

**Does this sound familiar? You are not alone, every college student – freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors – experience stress. Now what can you do about it?**